

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SES-02 SAA-01 SSM-03 CIAE-00  
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15  
NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01  
ACDA-12 IO-13 HA-05 /097 W  
-----119795 261106Z /12

O P 261006Z AUG 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9407  
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER  
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM  
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENG  
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER  
COMSIXTHFLT  
CTF SIX ZERO  
CTF SIX ONE  
CTF SIX TWO  
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO  
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA  
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN  
DIA WASHDC  
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER  
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4970

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE  
SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION, AUGUST 26, 1978, 1200 HOURS

REF: BEIRUT 4965 (DTG 251238Z AUG 78)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. SYRIAN SOLDIERS AND CHRISTIAN  
MILITIAMEN CLASHED IN THE NORTH LEBANESE DISTRICT OF  
THE KOURA, AND SYRIAN SOLDIERS CONFISCATED PHALANGIST  
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WEAPONS IN THE WESTERN BIQA. (COMMENT: SUCH INCIDENTS  
RAISE TENSION IN OTHER AREAS, INCLUDING BEIRUT, AND RISK  
PROVOKING WIDER CONFRONTATIONS EVEN WHEN SENIOR CHRISTIAN,  
SYRIAN AND GOL LEADERS DO NOT WISH ONE.) THE EAST  
BEIRUT CEASE-FIRE CONTINUES TO HOLD GENERALLY. THE  
PORT PASSED A SECOND SUCCESSIVE DAY WITHOUT ANY  
EXPLOSIONS. TWO SAUDI ARABIAN ADF OFFICERS SAID THAT

CRIMINAL GANGS, NOT THE SYRIANS OR THE PHALANGE, HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PREVIOUS FIRING ON THE PORT. PIERRE GEMAYEL SAID "WE REFUSE TO PAY ATTENTION TO PRESS ALLEGATIONS THAT THE CHRISTIAN PARTIES INTEND TO PROCLAIM A "FREE REPUBLIC OF LEBANON." CAMILLE CHAMOUN DESCRIBED AS "NONSENSE" PRESS STORIES THAT HE HAD BEEN PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S MYSTERY VISITOR THE NIGHT OF AUGUST 22.

## 2. FIGHTING IN KOURA.

THERE WAS FURTHER FIGHTING IN THE NORTHERN LEBANESE DISTRICT OF THE KOURA ON AUGUST 25. THE APPARENT SEQUENCE OF EVENTS WAS AS FOLLOWS (SEE ALSO PREVIOUS SITREP):

-- THE MORNING OF AUGUST 24, SUPPORTERS OF SULAYMAN FRANJIYAH KILLED EIGHT OR NINE PEOPLE IN AN AMBUSH IN KAFTOUN, NEAR BATROUN, IN KOURA DISTRICT. TWO OF THE DEAD WERE PHALANGE PARTY MEMBERS.

-- THE AFTERNOON OF AUGUST 25, UNIDENTIFIED GUNMEN (PRESUMABLY PHALANGISTS) ATTACKED TWO TRUCK LOADS OF SYRIAN SOLDIERS NEAR THE TOWN OF DIRYA. SYRIAN HELICOPTERS FLEW IN AND EVACUATED THE DEAD AND WOUNDED RESULTING FROM THE AMBUSH.

-- SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, SYRIAN FORCES, BACKED BY HEAVY  
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ARTILLERY AND TANKS, STARTED TO COMB THE AREA IN SEARCH OF THE GUNMAN. (THE NLP CLAIMED 2500 SYRIANS WERE INVOLVED.) CHRISTIAN MILITIAMEN, MAINLY PHALANGISTS, ENGAGED THE SYRIANS. CHRISTIAN SOURCES SAID ABOUT TWENTY PEOPLE HAD BEEN KILLED, ACCORDING TO L'ORIENT-LE JOUR.

-- AT ABOUT 2100 HOURS AUGUST 25, THE FIGHTING STOPPED. AS OF 1200 HOURS AUGUST 26, WE DO NOT YET HAVE FURTHER REPORTS OF FIGHTING.

## 3. TENSION IN BIQA.

A. IN AN APPARENTLY RELATED INCIDENT, SYRIAN FORCES THE MORNING OF AUGUST 25 SURROUNDED THE VILLAGES OF AYN ATA AND DAYAR AL AHMAR IN THE WESTERN BIQA AND SEARCHED A NUMBER OF HOUSES IN THEM, ACCORDING TO IKE. THE SYRIANS CONFISCATED 100 WEAPONS, MOSTLY BELONGING TO THE PHALANGE PARTY, AND DESTROYED ONE HOUSE IN EACH TOWN, THE PAPER SAID.

B. ON AUGUST 23, THE SYRIANS HAD ORDERED THE PHALANGE PARTY TO CLOSE ITS OFFICES IN THE ZAHLE AREA, ACCORDING TO A WELL PLACED PHALANGE SOURCE. THE PHALANGE SOURCE SAID HIS

PARTY WOULD RESIST, AND VIOLENCE IN THE AREA IS POSSIBLE.

C. COMMENT. THE INCIDENTS SUCH AS THOSE IN THE  
KOURA AND THE BIQA DEMONSTRATE THE VIRTUAL IMPOSSIBILITY

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OF KEEPING PEACE WHEN THERE ARE ARMED MEN THROUGHOUT  
THE COUNTRY NOT UNDER GOVERNMENT CONTROL. MOREOVER,  
SUCH INCIDENTS RAISE TENSION IN OTHER AREAS, INCLUDING  
BEIRUT, AND RISK PROVOKING WIDER CONFRONTATIONS, EVEN  
WHEN SENIOR/CHRISTIAN, SYRIAN AND GOL LEADERS DO NOT WISH  
ONE. END COMMENT.

4. SITUATION IN BEIRUT.

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THE EAST BEIRUT CEASE-FIRE CONTINUES TO HOLD GENERALLY. THERE HAS BEEN NO FURTHER SNIPING ON THE FUAD SHEHAB FLYWAY AS OF 1200 HOURS AUGUST 26. THE FLYWAY, WHICH IS ONE OF THE MAIN ARTERIES CONNECTING EAST AND WEST BEIRUT, REMAINS CLOSED TO TRAFFIC, HOWEVER.

5. THE PORT.

A. BEIRUT PORT PASSED A SECOND SUCCESSIVE DAY ON AUGUST 25 WITHOUT ANY EXPLOSIONS. AS OF 1200 HOURS AUGUST 26, WE HAVE NO FURTHER REPORTS OF EXPLOSIONS.

B. TWO SAUDI ARABIAN ADF OFFICERS TOLD EMBOFF EVENING OF AUGUST 25 THAT NEITHER SYRIANS NOR PHALANGE HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR FIRING ON THE PORT FROM AUGUST 18 - 23. HE SAID FIRING WAS DONE BY APOLITICAL CRIMINALS - BOTH MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS - WHO HAD BEEN MAKING HUGE AMOUNTS OF MONEY DURING PERIODS OF CHRISTIAN/SYRIAN FIGHTING BY LOOTING THE PORT. GANGS HAD HOPED TO KEEP PORT CLOSED SO THAT THEIR LOOTING COULD CONTINUE.

C. (COMMENT:  
SYRIANS WOULD SEEM TO HAVE INTEREST IN REOPENING OF PORT, SINCE NORMALIZATION OF LIFE RENDERS THEIR SECURITY TASK HERE EASIER. APPARENT PHALANGE INTEREST IN REOPENING WAS DEMONSTRATED BY FACT THAT PHALANGE LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL FORMALLY VISITED THE PORT ON AUGUST 18 SHORTLY BEFORE IT WAS SHELLED. END COMMENT.)

6. ALLEGED FREE LEBANESE REPUBLIC.

A. LEBANESE PRESS ON AUGUST 26 REPLAYED STORIES  
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IN THE SYRIAN PRESS AND IN THE SAUDI NEWSPAPER AL-NADWA SAYING THAT THE CHRISTIAN PARTIES IN LEBANON INTENDED TO PROCLAIM A "FREE REPUBLIC OF LEBANON" WHICH WOULD BE ALLIED WITH ISRAEL. PIERRE GEMAYEL REPLIED TO THESE STORIES AS FOLLOWS ON AUGUST 25:

B. "WE REFUSE TO PAY ATTENTION TO THOSE WHO ACCUSE US OF WANTING TO FOUND A FREE REPUBLIC, BUT WE REPLY NEVERTHELESS THAT THE LEBANESE, BOTH CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM, ARE THE ONLY ONES ABLE TO DECIDE THE FATE

OF THEIR COUNTRY, WHETHER IT IS A QUESTION OF A NEW  
REPUBLIC, OF PROTECTING THE LEGITIMATE AUTHORITIES  
OR OF PARTITION."

C. COMMENT: GEMAYEL DID NOT DIRECTLY DENY THE  
SYRIAN AND SAUDI PRESS ALLEGATIONS. WHILE WE HAVE  
NO INDICATION WHAT THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS ARE PLANNING  
AT THIS TIME TO OPT FOR A SMALLER LEBANON ALLIED  
WITH ISRAEL, SOME PEOPLE WITHIN THE PHALANGE AND NLP  
FAVOR SUCH A SOLUTION. END COMMENT.

7. CHAMOUN ON MYSTERY VISITOR.

LEBANESE PRESS ON AUGUST 26 CITED A JERUSALEM  
POST STORY AFFIRMING THAT CAMILLE CHAMOUN WAS PRIME  
MINISTER BEGIN'S MYSTERY VISITOR THE NIGHT OF AUGUST 22.  
CHAMOUN, COMMENTING ON THIS REPORT, CLAIMED THAT IT WAS  
"NONSENSE". FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS SAID: "I HAVE  
NO COMMENT. ALL I KNOW ABOUT THIS IS WHAT I READ IN  
THE NEWSPAPERS."  
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## Message Attributes

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